

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETING  
SUMMARY MINUTES  
JUNE 12, 2003 – HILTON ORLANDO/ALTAMONTE SPRINGS

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Helen Stairs – Helen Stairs Theatre  
Frank Fry – Holiday Inn Altamonte  
Jay Sheppard – Best Western Marina Hotel  
Linda Marshall – SpringHill Suites Altamonte  
Pat Freeman – Altamonte Springs City Commission  
Steve Wolfram – Council of Local Governments  
Dick Van Der Weide - Board of County Commissioners

MEMBERS ABSENT:

M.M. “Red” McCullough – McCullough & Assoc.  
Bill Beuret – Maison et Jardin Restaurant

STAFF PRESENT:

Suzan Bunn – Seminole County CVB  
Kathryn Townsend – Seminole County CVB  
Laura Richeson – Bennett & Company  
Ann E. Colby – County Attorney’s Office  
Doug Barclay – Central Florida Sports Commission  
Fran Sullivan – Seminole County CVB

GUESTS:

Jason Weeks – Altamonte Sports  
Bruce Skwarlo – Orlando Marriott Lake Mary  
Penny Leffel – Courtyard By Marriott/SpringHill Suites Sanford  
Stephanie Andry – Residence Inn  
Rick Love – Ramada Inn  
Jim Sega – Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs  
Lou Edwards – Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs  
Jamie Ross – Hilton Garden Inn Lake Mary  
Belinda Ortiz – CFHLA  
Stephanie Kobrin – Seminole County Library & Leisure Services  
Maggie Shoemaker – Homewood Suites Lake Mary  
Dana Hirshburg – Homewood Suites Lake Mary  
Gail Remmers – MainStay Suites Lake Mary  
Mark Plebanski – Residence Inn  
Jim Pitts – UCF Foundation  
R.T. Hillery – City of Sanford  
Sean Meder – Independent Softball Association

**CALL TO ORDER**

Call to order by Frank Fry, TDC Chair, at 12:30 p.m. followed by introductions. Attendance at TDC meetings has steadily increased since January.

**APPROVAL OF APRIL 10, 2003 MINUTES**

The minutes of the April 10, 2003 meeting were approved on a motion made by Helen Stairs and seconded by Linda Marshall.

### **EVENT SPONSORSHIP REQUESTS**

**Got Milk? 3x3 Soccer Shootout Regional Championship** – Request for \$15,000 for bid fee. Doug Barclay explained this regional event will be held at the Seminole County Soccer Complex in August. Last year's event was larger than anticipated, and this year over 300 teams including more from out of state are expected. Hotel lead sheets have been sent. Details of projected economic impact were provided. A motion to approve \$15,000 by Jay Sheppard was seconded by Linda Marshall. Pat Freeman raised a question about the availability of funds. Kathryn Townsend responded funds for this event were budgeted in the Promotion and Sponsorship approved budget for fiscal year 02/03. The motion carried unanimously.

**2003 ISA Class B World Championship** – Request for \$3,000 for bid fee. Doug Barclay noted this repeat softball event brings in a large number of out-of-town spectators and participants. Approximately 700 participants, 700 spectators and 900 hotel room nights are projected. The Seminole County logo will be prominent in advertising, program, banners, etc. Hotel lead sheets are forthcoming. A motion to approve by Helen Stairs was seconded by Linda Marshall. The motion carried unanimously.

### **STAFF REPORTS**

**Financial** – Kathryn Townsend reported year-to-date revenue is 2% below last fiscal year. April 2003 revenue remains 11% below April 2002 and nearly 23% below pre-9/11. The budget report remains unremarkable. Members received a budget comparison sheet with an overview of this year's budget and the next two years. Revenue projections for 03/04 and 04/05 were provided by Seminole County Fiscal Services. Three days after her arrival Suzan Bunn was tasked with cutting nearly \$350,000 from the 03/04 budget and \$191,000 from the 04/05 budget. The promotion and advertising budget will be cut by about half. Cuts were made across the board, and only budgeted events or events that have proven successful in the past will be funded. Pat Freeman read a letter to Jason Weeks stating that due to the economic shortfall Altamonte Sports would not receive \$50,000 in reimbursable monies from Seminole County. At her request Kathryn Townsend will provide her with a list of past event sponsorships before her next City Commission meeting. Frank Fry observed this would be helpful information to the TDC as the Board considers future sponsorships. It was generally agreed we will have to seek more events that do not require bid fees.

Kathryn recalled the TDC's vote to reduce the zoo grant from \$270,000 to \$170,000 for next fiscal year with a cap of \$100,000 for subsequent years. She informed members by direction of the County Manager's Office a contract to sustain the zoo grant at \$270,000 will go forward at the first County Commission meeting in October. This necessitated cutting \$50,000 from this year's budget and an additional \$50,000 from the 03/04 budget as indicated on the Budget Adjustments report. The budget will be adjusted accordingly if commissioners do not approve continuing zoo funding at the current level. Questions and lengthy discussion followed. Pat Freeman questioned the justification of the zoo decision. Commissioner Van Der Weide responded the County Commission will address the issue at the budget work session in July. Frank Fry stressed these are uncertain times, and it would be accurate to say if the convention center was not an issue and if the market recovered and business rebounded, the zoo would probably not be as big an issue as it now is.

Members were reminded the 02/03 total of over \$2 million includes reserves set aside for the convention center. Ann Colby explained TDC funds cannot legally be spent for a private development, but the current proposal as we understand it will require both public and private money. Commissioner Van Der Weide stated if it is approved by the County Commissioners, the amount of TDC funds would be less than \$300,000 or about half the amount of the first proposal. He also stated commissioners are being lobbied heavily by different groups and suggested this board doing the same. Frank Fry agreed the TDC should be vocal about expressing its views. He recalled prior to the private developer coming forward the TDC twice voted against the convention center issue and made it known publicly.

Linda Marshall requested that members be kept advised when a TDC vote is overturned. She expressed strong disagreement that things that actually generate revenue are rejected, and things that do not are supported.

**Sales** – Karen Brown was on a sales mission in North Carolina, and in her absence Suzan Bunn highlighted her report. Hospitality Night is on hold. The contract with WorldRes hotel direct booking engine has been approved. Twenty county hotels have already registered and we hope to enroll the others in the near future. She emphasized that although the budget has been cut, we have not cut any advertising dollars. We are committed to the media plan and industry co-ops for the remainder of the year. Meetings, sports and corporate groups are good niches for Seminole County. We plan to target sports heavily with a push for spring events. Seminole County is being considered as one of the venues for USA Rugby's relocation. A Request for Proposal (RFP) is going out for a new tenant at Lake Sylvan Park. There is 60,000 square feet of excellent meeting space in Seminole County hotels. We

will concentrate on increasing weekend, sports and reunion business. We are pursuing new markets, and Karen Brown's report reflects trade shows and events she has attended recently. Suzan affirmed sports bid money in next year's budget will be used selectively. We will supplement the Sports Commission's efforts and take an active and aggressive role to secure sports events. Suzan plans to meet with sports organizations to include the City of Sanford and Seminole County Parks and Recreation in hopes of developing a program for all sports entities to work together in a consolidated effort to increase business.

**Central Florida Sports Commission** – Doug Barclay reviewed upcoming events including the 2003 Got Milk? 3v3 Soccer Shootout Regional Championships and the 2003 ISA Men's B World Championships. The recent NCAA Division II Men's and Women's Tennis Championships was a great event and brought in approximately twice as many room nights as expected. NCAA looks forward to returning next year as part of the Sports Festival which in addition to tennis will have men's and women's golf, women's lacrosse and women's softball. Doug emphasized the Sports Commission's goal to create events. The US Amateur Soccer Association National Cup we hosted in 2001 packed the Seminole County Training Center and brought in an enormous amount of room nights. The Sports Commission is bidding on that event again as well as the 2004 USA Water Polo Men's Open and the 2005/2006 US Amateur Soccer Association Veteran's Cup. On behalf of Seminole County the Sports Commission is bidding to relocate USA Rugby's national headquarters to the Seminole County Training Center. Office space and fields in one complex makes us a top contender. This would bring in ten events a year not including coach, referee and youth clinics.

**Information Inquiries** – Fran Sullivan highlighted publications that generated high numbers of leads in May. Our ad in the Family Travel insert dropped in February and over 2000 leads have been received. To date we have received over 900 residual leads from last year's ad. Bennett & Co. and the TDC marketing subcommittee's recommendations for placements with best potential to generate leads are proving to be accurate. She informed members we receive a pre-publication discount on advertising in Visit Florida's Official Vacation Guide. Our ad in Redbook Magazine dropped in April and we have received nearly 2300 leads. The Florida In-State newspaper insert, Woman's Day and Southern Living always give us good response. This year we opted not to advertise in the international edition of the Florida Vacation Guide, but we continue to receive leads. To date our Seminole County Official Visitor Guide has generated over 300 leads. Suzan Bunn added we expect to receive the media conversion study from Choice Communications next week.

**PR & Marketing** – Laura Richeson distributed samples of ads completed in April and May. Editorial opportunities in the past two months include the Atlanta Journal Constitution, an outdoor reporter from the Herald Bulletin in Indiana, and the FLA USA Florida Events Planner. The agency is very excited about the opportunity to host media FAM tours before, during and after the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) Annual Convention in Orlando. Approximately 350 American travel writers from all across the U.S. will attend this key media event in November. We will combine our efforts into Camp Seminole style media FAMS for this group, and many industry members will be contacted to help with itineraries. Other recent media tour opportunities include a writer from the Palm Beach Post and Simon Veness from the Official Brit's Guide to Orlando and Walt Disney World. We had two mentions in the April and May issues of Southern Living magazine as well as significant coverage in our local market. Last fall we hosted Dan Millott for three days, and his three-page feature story on Seminole County appeared in a recent issue of Boca Magazine. At the conclusion of Laura's report the group viewed a 1½-minute video with a tourism feature that aired on WESH Channel 2 News the evening of our Tourism Awards Luncheon in May.

**Executive Report** – Suzan Bunn expressed appreciation for input and welcome she has received from the industry. She has been concentrating on being more proactive with e-leads, and she highlighted some upcoming consumer, meetings and sports promotions. The CVB is working on an upcoming corporate sales mission to Jacksonville, Miami and Tampa. In the event the convention center goes through, she has started making contacts for potential business for the facility. She will have an opportunity to network with meeting planners at Meeting Professional International's World Education Congress in August. We will participate in a promotion in American Youth Soccer Organization's publication, and we have been talking to the local YMCA about creating a marathon event. She is working on scheduling more AAU events locally. The CVB is planning a FAM/seminar for planners of military, family and retired corporate reunions in January/February 2004. We recently received the Review of Tourism report from Choice Communications. Suzan noted unlike previous studies, economic impact totals in this report do not include day trippers, and a tourist or traveler is defined as one who spends at least one night in Seminole County. The report is therefore more precise. Prediction and projections relative to recovery of corporate business travel is forthcoming from the research company. Copies of the reports are available to anyone who would like one.

**OLD BUSINESS** – None

**NEW BUSINESS** – None

**GENERAL DISCUSSION/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Frank Fry suggested inviting Suncor Properties to make a presentation to the TDC regarding plans for the convention center. Jay Sheppard offered he recently attended Suncor's presentation to the Sanford CRA seeking the group's endorsement of the project. He added Suncor is exploring the availability of public money and what concessions the City of Sanford and Seminole County are willing to make to promote the operation. It was generally agreed the project is still in the infant stage. Suncor will make a presentation to the Sanford Chamber next Tuesday. Bruce Skwarlo expressed appreciation to Frank Fry for representing the TDC and hoteliers at the May County Commission meeting.

Considerable time was spent on the subject of lobbying. Hoteliers were encouraged to call commissioners to express their views on issues discussed at this meeting. A suggestion was made for hoteliers to meet and discuss the possibility of lobbying on behalf of Altamonte Sports or any sporting event. Reverting to the zoo funding issue, Zoo Board member Jim Pitts emphasized it is a major Seminole County attraction and recalled the zoo was the reason voters initially passed the tourist tax. Frank Fry agreed but reemphasized the TDC's challenge to put "heads in beds." He added decision-making is difficult during these critical times, and marketing, advertising and sponsorships must be the TDC's first priority. He recalled the decision to reduce, not eliminate, zoo funding over a period of time. The TDC is an advisory board, and as Chair he is challenged to ensure that its message is carried to County Commissioners. Members were informed individuals are actively lobbying on behalf of the zoo, and it was suggested that a united delegation schedule appointments with commissioners. It was decided that Frank Fry will send a letter to County Commissioners expressing the TDC's views about zoo funding. Belinda Ortiz offered assistance and support from the Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association (CFHLA). Commissioner Van Der Weide stated letters should be neutral and should not contain derogatory remarks about any particular city or part of the County.

**NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION** – July 10, 2003 – SpringHill Suites, Altamonte Springs.

**ADJOURNMENT** - There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 2:00 p.m.